DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 351 597 CE 062 499

TITLE	Test-Taking Tips.
INSTITUTION	Mercer County Community Coll., Trenton, N.J.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC. National Workplace Literacy Program.
PUB DATE	92
CONTRACT	V198A10206
NOTE	24p.; For related documents, see CE 062 480-501.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Instructional Materials (For Learner) (051)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; Adult Literacy; *Employment Potential; Guessing (Tests); *Job Skills; Literacy Education; Mathematics Tests; Objective Tests; Open Book Tests; *Skill Development; Standardized Tests; *Study Skills; Teacher Made Tests; Test Anxiety; *Test Wiseness; Verbal Tests
IDENTIFIERS	*Workplace Literacy

ABSTRACT

This document is one of a series of student workbooks developed for workplace skill development courses or workshops by Mercer County Community College (New Jersey) and its partners. Designed to help employees who must take certification examinations for job retention and promotion, this test-taking tips course aims to help employees to use strategies that will improve their scores on tests. The materials for the 4-hour course include a course outline, a topical outline, a sample examination on material safety data sheets, and the following information sheets: before-the-test study strategies; curbing before-the-test worry; what to do in the test room; how to do your best on any kind of test; strategies for multiple choice, true/false, matching, verbal analogy, short answer, fill-in-the-blank, vocabulary, number problem, mathematics or figure series, reading comprehension, essay, identify and explain, oral, open-book, and take-home examinations; and most-used examination direction words. (KC)

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TEST-TAKING TIPS

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Prepared Under a United States Department of Education
National Workplace Literacy Program Grant to
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OVERVIEW OF WORKPLACE LITERACY PROJECT

Skills for Tomorrow, NOW

The Workplace Literacy Project resulted from a Department of Education grant, plus in-kind contributions from a partnership with General Motors Inland Fisher Guide Plant, Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory, and St. Francis Medical Center. The project is an attempt to find solutions to the growing "skills gap" in industry today. More than 25 million Americans cannot read the front page of a newspaper. In addition, workers whose average ages are rising, must produce in a technological environment that may not have existed when they began working. This lack of knowledge makes it difficult to compete in a technologically changing workplace. Moreover, an increasing number of immigrants have entered the workforce with limited English communication skills. In response to this growing need, the Federal government provided a grant to Mercer County Community College and its partners to develop ways to enrich and expand employees' basic workplace knowledge. The aim of the project was also to improve the self-esteem of the participants.

Support for the project was solicited from all levels of company management and the unions. In addition, an advisory council, comprising key management and employees from each company determined the design, goals, and time-frame of the project. Each company provided a liaison person from their site, and MCCC hired a director to manage the program. Employee release time for classes was site-specific.

Participation in the program was voluntary. Information about classes was disseminated through company letters, flyers, union notices, notices included with paychecks, and open forums with supervisors and employees.

The ABLE test was used for normative pre and post testing. Other types of evaluations varied from course to course. MCCC counselors met with each student to discuss present and future educational objectives.

Courses were offered in reading, business writing, math, science, and English as a Second Language. In addition, there were workshops in problem solving, stress management, and other work survival skills. The curricula for the courses were customized for each worksite to be as job focused as possible.

It is our hope that this program will serve as a model for other organizations to empower their employees with the skills needed to succeed in the changing technological workplace, today and in the future.

COURSE OUTLINE

TEST-TAKING TIPS

This course offers tips for studying effectively for tests. This is especially useful for employees who must take certification examinations for job retention and promotion.

- Use strategies that will improve their scores on tests

TOPICAL OUTLINE

- Before-the-test study strategies
- What to do about before-the-test worry
- What to do in the test room
- How to do your best on any kind of test
- Multiple choice test strategies
- True/false exam strategies
- Matching questions strategies
- Verbal analogy strategies
- Short answer and fill-in-the-blank test strategies
- Vocabulary test strategies
- Number problem strategies
- Math or figure series test problems
- Reading comprehension test strategies
- Essay exam strategies
- Identify-and-explain test strategies
- Oral exam strategies
- Open-book and take-home exam strategies
- Most-used exam direction words

OTHER

- 4 hours

Material Safety Data Sheets-Exam

For each of the following statements, circle the letter of the statement you think is the correct answer. Circle only one answer for each question.

1. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) provide information about:

a.) chemical substances within a product
b.) unsafe handling procedures
c.) product cost and delivery information

2. The responsibility of preparing or obtaining MSDS belongs to:

a.) engineering department
b.) your manager
c.) chemical manufacturer or importer

3. Which of the following is a physical hazard recognized by OSHA for inclusion on MSDS?

a.) carcinogen
b.) combustible liquid
c.) toxic agent

4. If the hazardous chemical is a mixture which has not been tested as a whole, the chemical and common name are listed for all ingredients that are:

a.) determined to be health hazards and which comprise 0.1% or more of the mixture
b.) identified as carcinogen and present at 0.1% or greater
c.) not determined to present a physical hazard when present in the mixture

5. The data on physical/chemical characteristics is provided to tell what the material is like and how it behaves. Which of the following characteristics does <u>not</u> belong in this section?

a.) boiling point
b.) water solubility
c.) flash point and method

6. The section on extinguishing media tells what is suitable for use on the burning material which of the following is a standard firefighting agent?

a.) dry soda ash
b.) dry chemical
c.) dry sodium chloride

7. If you are exposed to a hazardous chemical you would pay immediate attention to the effect caused by:

a.) writing about it
b.) touching it
c.) reading about it

8. If hazardous material is spilled or released, which should you do:

a.) avoid breathing gases and vapor
b.) wipe it up with your hands
c.) light a match

Before-the-Test Study Strategies

1. Find out what kind of test you're going to take

   -Ask the instructor
   -Look at past exams
   -Predict on past experience

2. Pick a cramming method

   -Intense cramming
   -Preferred cramming

3. Pretest

4. Prepare extra for problem-solving

5. Prepare extra for unfamiliar, quick-scoring exams

6. Prepare extra for essay exams

7. Form a study group for essays and orals

What to Do About Before-the Test Worry

1. Bolster your confidence
2. Minimize discomfort
3. Get happy
4. Shake your anger
5. Worry only about what's real
6. Know when to postpone
7. Get help for terror

What to Do in the Test Room

1. Get into the mood

   -Don't fight it
   -Get to the test room early enough to relax
   -Concentrate

2. Don't let test-taking anxiety get you down

3. Dump your worries onto paper

4. Push on!

How to Do Your Best on Any Kind of Test

1. Get the most credit in the least time

   -Decide whether to speed or not to speed
   -Budget your time
   -Read all the essay questions in advance
   -Leave the time-wasters for last
   -Check your watch
   -Use all the time

2. Give them what they ask for

   -Read critically
   -Flag tricky directions
   -Flag complicated questions
   -Use all the help you can get
   -Don't skip sample questions and answers

3. Watch out for careless errors

   -Double check when the pressure is off
   -Fill in the right blanks
   -On essays, don't waste space

4. Try to reason out answers to tough questions

   -Look for clues in the question
   -Look for clues in the answer choices
   -Keep your eyes open for memory joggers
   -Save tough questions for last
   -If all else fails - guess

5. Get special clues from standardized tests

   -Remember that questions proceed from easy to difficult
   -Fill in all the blanks
   -Remember the odds

6. Get special clues from instructor-prepared tests

   -Don't look too hard for hidden meanings in questions
   -Look for clues within the questions

Multiple-Choice Test Strategies

1. Work quickly

2. Give the answer the instructor wants

   -Make sure you understand precisely what the directions tell you to do
   -Study the "given" part of each question

3. Guess before you choose

4. Choose the closest answer

5. Eliminate implausible answers

6. Look for clue words or numbers

   -Watch for absolutes and qualifiers
   -Look for grammatical clues
   -Look for familiar phrases
   -Look for degrees of correctness

7. Guess

8. Do change answers

9. Never give up!

True-False Exam Strategies

1. Read carefully

2. Watch for clue words

   -Generally false - all, only, always, because
   -Generally true - none, generally, usually

3. Don't quibble

4. Guess

5. Don't change answers

Matching Questions Strategies

1. Read the directions

2. Find out which column has the longest phrases

3. Do the easy matches first

4. Do the tougher matches next

Verbal Analogy Strategies

1. Practice
2. Give the exact answer called for
3. Turn the analogies into sentences
4. Find a word for the possible relationship
5. Attack tough problems systematically
6. Make educated guesses

Short-Answer and Fill-in-the-Blank Test Strategies

1. Look for clues
2. Don't look too hard for hidden meaning
3. Watch the blanks
4. Overanswer
5. Make educated guesses

Vocabulary Test Strategies

1. When you know the word, watch out for traps

   -Beware of words similar to the right answer
   -Watch out for words that sound like the stem
   -Watch for grammar

2. If the word seems familiar, think

3. If you don't know the word, make an educated guess

   -Try association
   -Eliminate wrong parts of speech
   -Rule out stem word look-alikes
   -Watch out for answer look-alikes
   -Don't leave any blanks

4. If you know a second language, use it

5. Practice

Number Problem Strategies

1. Work systematically

   -Write carefully
   -Write in columns
   -Copy accurately
   -Watch for units of measure
   -Don't play hero

2. Organize your work

3. Use graphics

4. Estimate

5. Use all the information

6. Study graphs carefully

7. Reread the question

8. Don't quit

9. Attack multiple-choice number questions systematically

   -Don't look at the answers
   -Estimate
   -Make educated guesses

Math or Figure Series Test Problems

1. Understand what is called for
2. Guess first
3. Look for simple patterns
4. Look for subpatterns and subgroupings
5. Use the multiple-choice problem clues
6. Practice

Reading Comprehension Test Strategies

1. Ignore the instructions

2. Use your time wisely

   -Don't skip around after reading passages
   -Locate the easiest questions

3. Check your answers

4. Don't add any facts

5. Forget your own conclusions

Essay Exam Strategies

1. Find out who is grading the essays

2. Read all the questions

   -List what you know about each question

3. Reread the directions

4. Budget your time

   -50% for outlining; 50% for writing

5. Reread every question carefully

6. Pick a title

7. Outline your essay

   -Jot down the content
   -Estimate how many words you have to write
   -Organize your outline

8. Get involved in your essay

9. Write methodically

   -Write a topic statement
   -Organize your body
   -Write long

10. Write an ending

    -Summarize the general points you have made
    -Restate your topic sentence

11. Check your work

    -Content
    -Organization
    -Writing mechanics

12. If you run out of time, write that fact on your paper,then copy your essay's outline as completely as possible.

Identify-and-Explain Test Strategies

1. Start with the subject's name

2. Use descriptive words

3. Tell when and where the subject was important

4. Tell why the person, place, or thing was important

Oral Exam Strategies

1. Zero in on a topic

2. Think in threes

3. Public speaking takes practice

4. Make a good impression

5. Don't put on airs

6. Treat questions seriously

   -Jot down questions
   -Size up the questions
   -If you don't understand something, ask
   -Think

7. If you don't know an answer, don't panic

8. Make a good exit

Open-Book and Take-Home Exam Strategies

1. Become familiar with the textbook

2. Don't copy your essays out of the book

3. Prepare for problem-solving exams

Most-Used Exam Direction Words

The following words usually have the specific meanings listed below.

Compare: Show how they are the same and how they differ.
Contrast: Show how they differ.
Criticize: Examine the pros and cons and give your judgment.
Defend: Give details that prove it or show its value.
Define: Just give the meaning.
Describe: Give the details and examples that show what it is.
Discuss and review: Examine from all angles. (These words are catchalls. Depending on the teacher, they might mean trace, outline, describe, compare, list, explain, evaluate, defend, criticize, enumerate, summarize, or tell all you know about it.)
Distinguish: Tell how this is different from others similar to it.
Evaluate: Give your opinion as to the advantages and disadvantages.
Explain and show: Show, in logical sequence, how or why something happened (or both).
Illustrate: Give examples.
Justify: Give the facts and then prove it's true.
Name, list, tell, and enumerate: Give just the information that is specifically asked for.
Prove: Show that it is true and that its opposite is false.
Summarize and outline: Give the main points.
Trace: Show how something developed step by step (usually chronologically).

Other common terms, found in instructions and questions that should be carefully read and noted are:

synonym
antonym
similar to
the same as
the opposite of
assume that
only one correct choice
all but one
if
all of
none of